

## (12) INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization  
International Bureau(43) International Publication Date  
22 November 2001 (22.11.2001)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number  
**WO 01/88831 A3**

(51) International Patent Classification?: G06F 153/00

(81) Designated States (national): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EC, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW.

(21) International Application Number: PCT/US01/14694

(84) Designated States (regional): ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE, TR), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

(22) International Filing Date: 8 May 2001 (08.05.2001)

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

(30) Priority Data:  
60/203,933 12 May 2000 (12.05.2000) US

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Published:  
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21 March 2002

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

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(54) Title: METHOD/APPARATUS FOR ENABLING PURCHASERS TO OBTAIN RETURN INFORMATION TO RETURN PRODUCTS VIA ON LINE TRANSACTIONS

(57) Abstract: An electronic registration system facilitates authorized product returns and reduces the incidence of improper returns. A retailer sales associate is prompted to enter individual product identification information such as an individual serial number. This individual product identification information is then stored in a data base along with the date on which the product was sold and an appropriate UPC code, SKU number or manufacturer code. A check digit algorithm may be used to verify the serial number prior to storage. A sales receipt may be imprinted with at least the date of the transaction and the serial number. When a product is returned, the retailer may cross-reference the serial number on the product with that on the receipt to verify the sales receipt. Otherwise, the database may be searched for pertinent sales information. A customer may also access a return authorization engine via the Internet to obtain return approval, an authorization number, return instructions, etc. to reduce retailer hassle.

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## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US01/14694

## A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(7) :G06P 153/00

US CL. :705/28

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

## B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 705/28, 26

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

US patent database text search on EAST

Non patent literature search on DIALOG

## C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 5,984,508 A (HURLEY) 16 NOVEMBER 1999 SEE ABSTRACT AND FIGS. 2 AND 3	1-18
X	US 5,968,110 A (WESTROPE ET AL.) 19 OCTOBER 1999 SEE FIGS. 7 AND 8	1-18
A,E	US 6,269,344 B1 (JUNGER) 31 JULY 2001 SEE FIG. 3	1-18
A,P	US 6,085,172 A (JUNGER) 04 JULY 2000 SEE FIG. 3	1-18
A,P	US 6,154,738 A (CALL) 28 NOVEMBER 2000 SEE FIGS. 1 AND 7	1-18

Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.  See patent family annex.

- Special categories of cited documents	"T"	later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but used to understand the principle of theory underlying the invention
"A"		document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
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"O"	"Y"	document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
"P"	"Z"	document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

Date of the actual completion of the international search Date of mailing of the international search report

25 SEPTEMBER 2001

05 NOV 2001

Name and mailing address of the ISA/US Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks Box PCT Washington, D.C. 20231 Facsimile No. (703) 305-3230	Authorized officer  DOUGLAS A. HESS  Telephone No. (703) 305-3900
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